

Chapter 8 - Recommendations

The recommendations are summarised in the Executive Summary at the beginning of the Report. For ease of reference, the recommendations below are grouped by the subjects that address the following issues:

- a. Inbreeding and inherited disease and the selection for extreme morphologies.*
- b. Poor or negligent management and care of breeding dogs*
- c. Inadequacies in the way dogs are bought and sold*

Some recommendations are relevant to more than one issue.

Addressing inbreeding, inherited disease and selection for extreme morphologies

8.1 A non-statutory Advisory Council on Dog Breeding should be established. The key role of the Council should be to develop evidence-based breeding strategies that address the issues of poor conformation, inherited disease and inbreeding as appropriate to the specific breed and to provide advice on the priorities for research and development in these areas. I recommend that the Advisory Council members and Chairman should be appointed by open competition according to Nolan Principles. Defra should manage the selection process, drawing appropriately upon the advice of the devolved authorities and experts. Members should be selected on the basis of their personal expertise and not with regard to any personal affiliation or membership. Draft terms of reference and proposals for funding the Council are given at Appendix 7.

8.2 High priority should be given to the creation of a computer-based system for the collection of anonymised diagnoses from veterinary surgeries in order to provide statistically significant prevalence data for each breed. This should build upon the work already started by the Royal Veterinary College. It is important that this scheme is fully supported by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. In a pilot scheme, priority should be given to collecting data with respect to the conditions creating the greatest welfare challenges in terms of pain, impact on quality of life, capacity for correction, and early age of onset. The data collected should relate both to the incidence of inherited disease and to the incidence of veterinary procedures necessary to correct faults due to selection for extreme morphologies (e.g. Caesarean sections,

corrections for entropion, soft palate resections, etc).

8.3 Revisions of Breed Standards should recognise the need to avoid the selection for extreme morphologies that can damage the health and welfare of the dog. When possible, revisions should involve guidance from the Advisory Council on Dog Breeding. Where a welfare problem already exists within a breed, the breed standard should be amended specifically to encourage the selection for morphologies that will improve the welfare status of the breed. In these instances the breed standard may need to be more precise, either by aid of diagrams or quantitative ratios, in order to encourage the necessary changes.

8.4 I have recommended to the Kennel Club that it upgrades its Accredited Breeder Scheme promptly. If it is unable to do so and no other body steps forward to supply an appropriately robust and UKAS accredited scheme, a new scheme should be implemented under the auspices of the Advisory Council on Dog Breeding. The organisers of any accredited breeder scheme should apply for and obtain UKAS accreditation. The minimum conditions for such a scheme should be that:

- a. All pre-mating tests for inherited disease appropriate to the breed or breeds are undertaken on both parents.
- b. No mating takes place if the tests indicate that it would be inadvisable in the sense that it is likely to produce welfare problems in the offspring and/or is inadvisable in the context of a relevant breeding strategy (see also 8.2).
- c. Any prospective purchaser is able to view the puppies with their mother.
- d. Every puppy is identified by microchip prior to

sale.

- e. All pre-sale tests on the puppy which are appropriate to the breed have been carried out.
- f. The scheme establishes and requires clear, written standards of management with regard to the housing, health, exercising and socialising of all dogs on the premises managed by the registered breeder, including establishing minimum staffing levels appropriate to the numbers of dogs involved.
- g. All relevant documentation connected with the puppy including, inter alia, advice on feeding and care, registration documents, details of vaccinations etc are handed over to the purchaser at the time of sale. When an appropriate contract is available this should be signed by both parties.
- h. All assured breeders are inspected by duly appointed and trained scheme inspectors against the written standard, either before or shortly after registration with the assurance scheme; and regularly thereafter.
- i. Non-compliance with the standards of the scheme results in de-registration.
- j. If accolades are to be awarded to any breeder under an accredited scheme, they should clearly and solely relate to the provision of higher welfare standards.

8.5 Working with the profession as a whole, the RCVS and the BVA should lead a shift in emphasis towards preventative veterinary medicine rather than simply focus on the correction of problems after they have occurred.

Addressing poor or negligent management in the care of breeding dogs

8.6 When inspecting the premises of breeders that require licences, Local Authorities should address all welfare issues covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006, especially those relating to dog behaviour. In issuing a licence Local Authorities should specify the staffing levels necessary to ensure appropriate health and welfare, including exercise of parents and socialisation of the puppies. To facilitate this, licensed premises should be required to maintain records of staffing and those records should be available for inspection. Breeders' records should be inspected to ensure that breed-appropriate pre-mating tests and screening programmes have been carried out with regard to both parents and that decisions to breed are appropriate in the light of the results.

8.7 Irrespective of whether they are members of an Accredited Breeder scheme, all breeders should have their puppies microchipped before they are sold. Prospective purchasers should expect that this has been done before buying a puppy.

8.8 As soon as Parliamentary time permits, Regulations should be made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in order to:

- a. Require that all puppies should be indelibly identified, by implantation of microchip or such other equivalent system as may be developed, prior to sale; and that the ID number of the microchip or equivalent should be recorded on the contract of sale, all relevant health test certificates and registration documents and a central data base.
- b. Create an obligation on any person breeding dogs to have regard to the health and welfare of both the parents and the offspring of the mating.
- c. Require that any body laying down breed standards must have regard to the health and welfare of the dogs and the need to avoid breed specific health problems; and that in exercising such a power, the body could be regarded as exercising a power of a public nature and thus be susceptible to judicial review.
- d. Create such offences with regard to the above as seem appropriate.

8.9 Defra should implement a statutory Code of Practice on the Breeding of Dogs under Section 14 of the Act. The Code should encompass such issues as:

- a. The health and welfare of the parent dogs.
- b. The appropriate screening and testing of parents for breed specific disorders, as laid down in the relevant breeding strategy for the breed (or breeds) concerned.
- c. In selection of parents, due consideration being given to compliance with such elements of a breed standard as are intended to avoid extremes of conformation that create welfare problems.
- d. The health, welfare and appropriate socialisation of litters of puppies, in order to fit them for their future function.
- e. Mechanisms for the sale of the puppies.
- f. When UKAS accredited quality assurance schemes address all the issues covered by the code, the Code should recommend membership of such an accreditation scheme.

8.10 When Parliamentary time permits, regulations

should be introduced to replace the various Breeding and Sales of Dogs Acts. In drafting these regulations, consideration should be given to amending the definition of premises that require licensing in order to simplify and make more effective the enforcement of licensing standards and compliance with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Acts. Enforcement authorities should be enabled to carry out inspections on the basis of a risk assessment and to take account of achievement of accredited status under an appropriately enforced and audited accreditation scheme. In order both to facilitate effective enforcement and to encourage a responsible approach to purchasing by the general public, enforcement authorities should be required to maintain a list of licensed premises which is accessible on-line by the public. Consideration should also be given to creating a centralised database of persons who have been convicted or cautioned under animal welfare legislation. The Dangerous Dogs Act should be amended to apply to all dogs that have been shown to be dangerous rather than to specified breeds and should address the problem of dogs being bred and reared specifically as weapons or for fighting.

8.11 The British Veterinary Association should compile, and provide to Local Authorities, a list of veterinary practitioners willing to carry out and/or support inspections of licensed breeding premises.

Addressing inadequacies in the way dogs are bought and sold

8.12 Complementing all existing schemes, a public awareness and education campaign should be designed by expert practitioners, in order to persuade members of the general dog-buying public to change their behaviour in specific key respects and to provide readily comprehensible information on what questions to ask and what to look for when buying a dog. This should be supported and run by as many as possible of the dog and animal welfare organisations, acting jointly and in unanimity.

8.13 When robust and audited accreditation scheme(s) are available, the buying public should be pointed with confidence towards the accredited breeders as offering a genuinely higher standard of health and welfare to the animals in their care and thus towards a fit, healthy and appropriately socialised puppy.

8.14 The report by APGAW (2009) was published in November 2009. As I have already noted, their brief was narrower than mine, but where the focus of the two inquiries overlap, the recommendations should be brought together. I welcome the suggestion of the RSPCA that a meeting of the relevant parties should be convened as soon as possible after the publication of the present report.